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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Brockton Named One of the Nation's *100 Best Communities for Young People*  
By America's Promise Alliance and ING**

*Competition Recognizes Communities Taking Action to Help Reduce Local Dropout Rates and Create  
Brighter Futures for Young People*

**Brockton, Mass.**—The efforts of Brockton civic and community leaders were honored today when America's Promise Alliance (the Alliance), the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to youth and children, announced the city had been named a winner of the Alliance's *100 Best Communities for Young People (100 Best)* competition presented by ING, a global financial services company and leading provider of retirement plans and programs for teachers. Its 2010 recognition marks the third win for Brockton in the competition.

"I'm very excited that Brockton has received this prestigious honor," said Mayor Linda M. Balzotti. "Our community is what it is because of the hard work of adults who want our youth to succeed, and the equally hard work of young people who strive for that as well. Recognition at a national level helps us keep our forward momentum to bring innovative programs to the City; Brockton's Promise and other agencies keep our youth engaged in positive activities. I grew up in Brockton, and understand the importance of having these programs in place. I was able to benefit from programs like these, and would like to make sure this generation, and the next, gets that opportunity as well."

The *100 Best* designation recognizes those communities that make youth a priority by implementing programs that help keep children in school and prepare them for college and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. The competition is open to all communities that make children and youth a priority, including small towns, large cities, counties and school districts. In addition to enhancing local educational opportunities, most winning communities have taken steps to facilitate improved access to health care for its young people, encourage youth civic engagement and supply developmental resources that create better places for young people to live and grow. The entire 2010 list of *100 Best Communities for Young People* and their accomplishments can be found at [www.americaspromise.org/100Best](http://www.americaspromise.org/100Best).

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“Through its innovative and far-reaching programs, Brockton is taking bold and effective steps to help their young people graduate and lead healthy, productive lives,” said Marguerite W. Kondracke, America’s Promise Alliance president and CEO. “Brockton serves as an example to inspire and educate other communities across the nation to tackle the challenges facing their city and children, and to implement initiatives that give them the essential resources they need to succeed in life.”

Brockton was named one of the nation’s *100 Best* because of its dedication to providing resources and opportunities to community youth. Brockton’s Promise was established under the leadership from District Attorney Tim Cruz’s Office as a youth development initiative and collaborative effort, helping youth take advantage of the resources needed to succeed.

“It has been my pleasure to work in collaboration with the many parents, providers, and young people that help make Brockton a great place to live, work and play,” said Cruz. Utilizing the framework of the Five Promises has provided an opportunity to make the most out of available resources and strengthen programming for youth in a financially unstable time.”

Local health, social services, non-profit and faith-based organizations came together through Brockton’s Promise to provide mentors to at-risk youth and recruit members of the community to volunteer, supporting efforts to make education a city-wide concern.

“I am extremely happy that Brockton has won this prestigious award for the third time since its inception,” said Brockton Police Chief William Conlon. “Although our City has its share of problems, I strongly believe that the prevention work we do is starting to yield positive results throughout Brockton. This award is one of them.”

Brockton is placing a priority on improving its graduation rate and reaching at-risk students through innovative programs such as Keep Educating Yourself, an initiative that helps accommodate students who struggle to find balance within the traditional school system, offering support for older teens and young adults. Further establishing its goal of increasing the graduation rate, the Brockton Public Schools launched Afternoon Academy, a program for over-aged and under-credited students and dropouts, which provides afternoon classes so participants can hold jobs while working towards their GED.

“Brockton is a forward-thinking city that embraces its challenges and works to overcome them. In the schools, we see a lot of older students who need extra help and new pathways to education, and we are working to address their unique needs,” said Superintendent of Schools Matthew H. Malone, Ph.D. “It is always gratifying to be recognized for the work you are doing every day, and I am especially proud that the America’s Promise Alliance is recognizing Brockton for the collective and collaborative work that is going among a diverse partnership of agencies and organizations.”

On September 21, 2010, Brockton and the other winners spanning 37 states were recognized at a ceremony in front of the Washington Monument on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. Each of the winning communities was formally recognized with a designation on a map of the U.S., illustrating the geographic and demographic diversity of the winning 100 communities. In addition to the *100 Best* distinction, Brockton and the other top communities will receive two road signs identifying the city as one of *100 Best*, as well as a trophy to be presented to local officials later this year.

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Alliance Chair Alma Powell and President and CEO Marguerite W. Kondracke revealed the list of winners during the national celebration. They were joined by Rhonda Mims, president of the ING Foundation and senior vice president, ING's Office of Corporate Responsibility and Multicultural Affairs and *Twilight's* Kellan Lutz, who both share a passion for the development of young people.

"ING is committed to children's education and to the advancement of education initiatives that prepare them for successful futures," said Mims. "Our support for *100 Best* demonstrates our goal of honoring communities like Brockton that produce real, measurable results for improving the lives of young people."

The competition is one element of the Alliance's Grad Nation campaign, a 10-year initiative to mobilize all Americans to take action in their communities to end the high school dropout crisis and prepare young people for college and the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce. More than 7,000 students drop out each school day in the U.S., resulting in 1.3 million young people a year. To help decrease these numbers, the Alliance is more committed than ever to recognizing communities – regardless of size, location or history – that are taking real action to help more young people stay in school and graduate on time.

"*100 Best* is an essential building block of an inspiring national movement that gives everyone a chance to ensure every young person graduates," said Powell. "These winning communities refuse to let the challenges they face be the determining factor in the lives of their children and youth. Instead, they are helping to build an infrastructure of assertive, successful and dynamic young people that are the future of this country."

#### **About *100 Best***

First held in 2005, *100 Best* honors communities large and small, rural and urban, that are making progress to help young people achieve their potential, which includes earning a high school diploma, securing a good job, and playing an active, productive role in America's economic vitality. This year, more than 350 communities in 50 states registered online for the *100 Best* distinction at [www.americaspromise.org/100best](http://www.americaspromise.org/100best).

Being a *100 Best* community not only demonstrates commitment to local young people; the award fosters local pride, bolsters economic development and shines the spotlight on the people and programs that are building better communities. The competition also facilitates the sharing of best practices among communities nationwide regarding education, access to health care, reading score improvement, youth service and pre-school enrollment, among many other areas.

#### **About America's Promise Alliance**

America's Promise Alliance is the nation's largest partnership organization dedicated to improving the lives of children and youth. Through the collective power of our partner network, we raise awareness, support communities and engage in nonpartisan advocacy to ensure that young people receive more of the fundamental resources they need to graduate high school prepared for college, work and life. Building on the legacy of our Founding Chairman General Colin Powell, the Alliance believes the success of our young people is grounded in the Five Promises—caring adults; safe places; a healthy start; an effective education; and opportunities to help others. For more information about America's Promise Alliance, visit [www.americaspromise.org](http://www.americaspromise.org).

#### **About ING**

ING is a global financial institution of Dutch origin offering banking, investments, life insurance, and retirement services to over 85 million residential, corporate and institutional clients in more than 40 countries. With a diverse workforce of about 115,000 people, ING is dedicated to setting the standard in helping our clients manage their financial future.

In the U.S., the ING (NYSE: ING) family of companies offers a comprehensive array of financial services to retail and institutional clients, which includes life insurance, retirement plans, mutual funds, managed accounts, alternative investments, direct banking, institutional investment management, annuities, employee benefits, and financial planning. ING holds top-tier rankings in key U.S. markets and serves nearly 30 million customers across the nation.

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ING's diversity management philosophy and commitment to workplace diversity, diversity marketing, corporate citizenship and supplier diversity fosters an inclusive environment for employees that supports a distinctive product and service experience for the financial services consumer. For more information, visit [www.ing.com/us](http://www.ing.com/us).

**About the ING Foundation**

The ING Foundation's mission is to improve the quality of life in communities where ING operates and its employees and customers live. Through charitable giving and employee volunteerism, the foundation focuses on programs in the areas of financial literacy, children's education, diversity, and environmental sustainability. For more information, visit [www.ing-usafoundation.com](http://www.ing-usafoundation.com).

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